

IN THE CLAIMS

A clean set of all pending claims is submitted, consolidating all previous versions of pending claims. If changes have been made to the previous version of the claims by the current response, the clean set is followed by a marked-up version indicating the changes made (see 37 CFR 1.121(c)(3)).

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for operating a computer-based accounts payable system, said method comprising the steps of:

5 a. receiving into said system an approval for authorizing a particular billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each having a first budget amount stored in a first database;

10 b. determining whether said particular billing code is present in a second database comprising a second plurality of billing codes each having a second budget amount;

c. generating a communication from said system authorizing said second budget amount associated with said particular billing code in response to said particular billing code matching one of said second plurality of billing codes; and

15 d. generating said communication authorizing said first
budget amount associated with said particular billing code in
response to said particular billing code matching none of said
second plurality of billing codes.

2. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 1, wherein
said particular billing code is associated with a task.

3. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 2, further
comprising the step of:

 generating an authorization form for said task before
determining whether said particular billing code is present in said
5 second database.

4. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 1, further
comprising the step of:

 receiving a selection of a firm associated with said
second budget database prior to determining whether said particular
5 billing code is present in said second database.

8. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) A computer-based system for
handling accounts payable, said system comprising:

means for receiving an approval comprising a particular
billing code of a first plurality of billing codes each having a
5 first budget amount stored in a first database;

means for determining whether said particular billing
code is present in a second database comprising a second plurality
of billing codes each having a second budget amount;

means for authorizing said second budget amount
10 associated with said particular billing code in response to said
particular billing code matching one of said second plurality of
billing codes; and

means for authorizing said first budget amount associated
with said particular billing code in response to said particular
15 billing code matching none of said second plurality of billing
codes.

9. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The system of claim 8, wherein
said particular billing code is associated with a task.

10. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The system of claim 9, further
comprising:

means for generating an authorization form for said task.

11. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The system of claim 8, further comprising:

means for receiving a selection of a firm associated with said second database.

15. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) A computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said system comprising:

means for receiving a bill comprising a billing code and a billing amount associated with said billing code;

5 means for determining an authorized amount associated with said first billing code from a database; and

means for approving payment of said billing amount in response to said billing amount not exceeding said authorized amount.

16. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The system of claim 15, wherein said billing code is associated with a task.

17. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The system of claim 16, further comprising:

means for checking whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

18. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The system of claim 15, further comprising:

means for not approving payment in response to said authorized amount being less than said billing amount.

19. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The system of claim 18, further comprising:

means for automatically generating a communication in response to not approving payment.

20. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The system of claim 15, wherein said bill comprises an electronic spreadsheet.

21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for operating a computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said method comprising the steps of:

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5 a. receiving into said system a bill comprising a billing code and a billing amount associated with said billing code;

b. determining an authorized amount associated with said billing code from a database; and

c. generating an approval from said system for payment
10 of said billing amount in response to said billing amount not
exceeding said authorized amount.

22. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 21, wherein
said billing code is associated with a task.

23. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 22, further
comprising the step of:

checking whether said task has been completed before
approving payment of said bill.

24. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 21, further
comprising the step of:

not approving payment in response to said authorized
amount being less than said billing amount.

25. (PREVIOUSLY AMENDED) The method of claim 21, wherein
said bill comprises an electronic spreadsheet.

26. (PREVIOUSLY ADDED) The method of claim 3, further
comprising the step of:

calculating a due date for completion of said task.

27. (PREVIOUSLY ADDED) The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of:

automatically sending said authorization form with said due date to a selected firm.

28. (PREVIOUSLY ADDED) The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of:

entering one of said first budget amount and said second budget amount into a third database.

29. (PREVIOUSLY ADDED) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for calculating a due date for completion of said task.

30. (PREVIOUSLY ADDED) The system of claim 15, further comprising:

means for approving payment of said authorized amount in response to said billing amount exceeding said authorized amount.

31. (PREVIOUSLY ADDED) The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of:

approving payment of said authorized amount in response
to said billing amount exceeding said authorized amount.